

Title of Session: Language Arts Forum - Creepy Reading and Writing!

Moderator: Donna Hendry

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DonnaH: Obviously, I'm this evenings session leader:)

DonnaH: My name is Donna Hendry, and I'm an educational consultant living in Connecticut.

MichelleDT: Nice to meet you!

MichelleDT: I am Michelle Thrower and I teach 4th grade in Calhoun, Louisiana.

OfJennifeW: My name is Jennifer Willis and I'm the librarian at an elementary school 3-5

DonnaH: In order to help foster the community spirit, as well as help guide my discussion, please introduce yourselves...(age level interest is always helpful!)

JenniferH4: My name is Jennifer Harris. I am a fourth grade Reading and Language Arts teacher in Louisiana

OfJennifeW: I'm Don'a Delgado a 4th grade ELA teacher at the same school

KristinDP: I am Kristin Pipes and I am a pre-sevice teacher at the University of Houston

JudySi: my name is Judy and I'm a student at University of Houston. I English Language Arts fourth through eight grade. My goal is to teach fifth or sixth grade.

DonnaH: (I think that is everyone?)

DonnaH: Good all in the same general age group...makes my life eternally easier!

DonnaH: In case you haven't guessed; tonight's discussion is going to be centered on creepy reading/writing.

OfJennifeW: Sounds interesting

JudySi: that is cool with me

KristinDP: sounds great

DonnaH: I saw a good portion of you are in Louisiana.

DonnaH: Good cemeteries down there *grin*

MichelleDT: We all teach at the same school!

DonnaH: *chuckle*

JenniferH4: sounds great to me, all the help I can get

DonnaH: have you ever taken students to local cemeteries?

KristinDP: no

MichelleDT: Our school is next to a haunted house called the Edge of Madness! HA!

OfJennifeW: no

JudySi: no

OfJennifeW: DD no

DonnaH: Usually, it's done as a social studies project.

JenniferH4: no

DonnaH: First, I'm incredibly morbid. I love old cemeteries.

DonnaH: But there is SO much to learn from them.

MichelleDT: We took some students to Washington DC and visited a cemetary.

DonnaH: Local cemeteries mean local history.

DonnaH: Can also be used for civics, art (rubblings), and yes, creative writing.

DonnaH: If a field trip isn't likely or possible, share with students pictures or rubbings...

JudySi: I will probably use it for creative writing

DonnaH: Older stones often have quite a bit of information to start a student off.

JenniferH4: how can I use it for writing?

MichelleDT: I can see how math could apply also!

DonnaH: two different ways; one, use the cemetery art to start a creepy story...or using the details in the epitaph, have students write a story about the person.

OfJennifeW: Do you have to get permission to do this

DonnaH: in older cemeteries, many children passed away.

JudySi: that is a really cool idea to get students writing.

DonnaH: as far as going into the cemeteries? or from the school/parents?

JudySi: students will love something like that

OfJennifeW: Going into the cemeteries

JenniferH4: I think they would enjoy this being close to Halloween

DonnaH: Cemeteries where I live (in New England) are open. The only ones that might cause a problem are ones that belong to specific churches.

DonnaH: in which case, I'd simply ask the church if they minded.

DonnaH: with slightly older students, you could have them choose a head-stone; have them write a bit of historical fiction, and then have them research what they could find out about the person.

OfJennifeW: Do you use this for factual writing? what their lives were like for research or what students imagine

DonnaH: and as I said; if the field trip itself isn't a possibility...check out taking pictures, or rubbings.

DonnaH: I would do both

DonnaH: let them start with just the facts on the stone.

DonnaH: (or those surrounding...after all, you'd have an idea of who their siblings could've been...who their mom and dad were...after all families are usually buried together *smile*)

OfJennifeW: This would be a great start for a family tree project or genealogy

DonnaH: if a large group seemed to die in the same time period, students could reasonably suppose there was some sort of epidemic...let them research diseases, like small pox, or yellow fever...

DonnaH: and have them describe what their 'character' went through.

MichelleDT: I love the idea of taking digital pictures. It would be easier than a field trip for us.

JenniferH4: sounds great

OfJennifeW: That's a very good idea

DonnaH: (I actually took almost a whole cd of pics in the Boston cemeteries along the freedom trail)

JudySi: you are really into cemeteries

DonnaH: which is a WHOLE other concept. looking into places that are historically relevant.

OfJennifeW: How did you get involved in this? was it a personal interest first

DonnaH: *chuckle* it was just the trip.

JenniferH4: any other ideas to get students interested in writing

DonnaH: my in-laws came out from CA...and had never been...so they wanted to walk the trail.

DonnaH: more creepy writing...

JenniferH4: anything

JudySi: as a future teacher how do I get my students interested in writing. I am observing at a middle school this semester and the students do not want to write at all. How does any teacher overcome this problem?

DonnaH: I've done this with summer school...(lower level kids...and we don't have AC in our schools in the summer...so its hot, and we'd turn lights off to keep it a bit cooler)

MichelleDT: I've always been interested in cemeteries! I love the history also! I'm excited to try this with my students! What a great Halloween adventure!

JenniferH4: I just want them to enjoy writing and not moan every time we write

DonnaH: so we would sit in a circle and create campfire stories....you know the sort...'it was a dark and stormy night...'

DonnaH: the teacher gives the first line...

DonnaH: then the next student repeats the teacher's line, and adds their own.

MichelleDT: I think students would be interested and want to write! All students like spooky stories!

JenniferH4: neat idea

DonnaH: each student repeating what was said before...so the last student has to remember an awful lot.

MichelleDT: Don't put your weakest student last!

DonnaH: BUT...it is a great exercise for sequencing, memory, and creativity.

OfJennifeW: This is so out of the ordinary I think they wouldn't even realize they were learning because of the fun they were having

JenniferH4: yes!

DonnaH: the students LOVED it.

DonnaH: I could usually get twice around the circle.

DonnaH: each student would then go back to their desk, write THEIR part of the story on a page and draw the picture to it.

DonnaH: then they would have to re-sequence it to create a class book.

JenniferH4: I might have to try that next week during enrichment

DonnaH: course, I'd let the kids get pretty gross (*what's the point of doing a creepy story if you can't talk gross?)

JenniferH4: they would like that

MichelleDT: I agree!

DonAD: All the boys would have that covered

DonnaH: I'd love to hear how it goes, if you do, Jennifer!

JudySi: I agree

DonnaH: they loved it.

DonnaH: and of course, as teacher, I would take my turn, and they all got the giggles when I'd repeat the obnoxious, gross things

DonnaH: they'd said.

DonnaH: (wow, suddenly got quiet!)

OfJennifeW: Who would believe a teacher could be gross---they would get a big kick out of that

MichelleDT: We did a descriptive writing of a haunted house as a class story. The kids loved it. Many of them added to the story in their writing journals on their own time. They couldn't wait to share their stories with the class.

JudySi: they surly would

DonnaH: oh, I had fun with the gross part. They liked that.

DonnaH: the verbal part helped those who didn't feel like they were strong writers...

OfJennifeW: In LA we have a couple of haunted plantations some students have gone on field trips that would be a neat spin off

DonAD: My students hear gross stories from me all the time. I tell them stories about growing up with 5 brothers.

JenniferK2 joined the room.

JenniferK2: Better late than never.....sorry

DonnaH: and the class writing made sure that no one child had to think of the entire story on their own.

DonAD: Hey Jen K

OfJennifeW: That's very gross I only had two--boys can be very nasty!!

MichelleDT: You need to come down to New Orleans and tour some cemeteries! They have tours and everything!

DonnaH: I know! And I missed them last time I was down there!

OfJennifeW: Live here and I haven't been to one yet but would like to

DonnaH: that's why I brought it up...you have a very unique opportunity there.

DonnaH: (I'll go to some of the old ones up here...some are as early as 1640's.)

JenniferK2: I did the haunted tour and the vampire tour last time I was in NO....GREAT tours but I haven't done the plantation ones

DonAD: I am not as into scary as my students tend to be. I am a big chicken. I can do gross but it gets to scary and I am outa there.

KristinDP: they have a vampire tour?

JenniferK2: some of the cemetery tours are only conducted in October

JenniferH4: me too Donna

JenniferK2: YUP. Cool one too.

MichelleDT: They also have haunted plantation tours!

DonnaH: Well, what scares me isn't likely to be something 4th graders are aware of...so I'm pretty safe:)

JenniferK2: *LOL*

OfJennifeW: They have a very interesting history you could research on the internet

OfJennifeW: if not able to do a field trip

DonnaH: *nods*

DonnaH: (and, btw, if someone wants, I can give some of the pics I took out...I made sure the stones were legible)

DonnaH: but I don't have them up online (I'm lazy)

DonnaH: another thing you could do...

DonnaH: isn't expository writing part of 4th grade curriculum?

JenniferH4: yes

JenniferK2: Yes.

DonnaH: have students explain how to either...a) create a costume or b) how to put one on...

DonAD: that would be cute

OfJennifeW: that sounds like a lot of fun

MichelleDT: How to carve a pumpkin!

DonnaH: oooh I like that one.

DonnaH: then have them try to follow the directions?

JudySi: I like the pumpkin idea

DonnaH: *giggle*

JenniferK2: For our area, might be a good idea for them to explain what Halloween is

DonnaH: what do you mean Jen?

JenniferK2: We live in a Baptist Bible belt

JenniferK2: Heavy with Pentecostals too...every year I get it's the devil's birthday

JenniferK2: It's satan's day

DonnaH: ahhhhhhhhhhh

DonnaH: gotcha.

JenniferK2: Etc. It actually has a very neat history to it

DonnaH: course, then you'd have to be careful...otherwise, you'll be accused of teaching the kids how to become wiccan satanists.

JenniferK2: Exactly...and lets not talk about Harry Potter and what he's teaching.

OfJennifeW: Although I can't say how many kids that book as gotten kids hooked on reading

JenniferK2: I know my oldest is one

JenniferK2: I can't get a book out of his hand

KristinDP: That's a good thing

DonnaH: *snicker* don't talk to me about Harry Potter.

DonnaH: I'm a fiend.

DonAD: me too

DonnaH: (I write Harry Potter fan fiction in my spare time)

KristinDP: I love Harry Potter

OfJennifeW: Waiting on the new one

MichelleDT: I'm ready for book 6!

DonAD: I have watched the movies but they do not do the books justice.

KristinDP: likewise

DonnaH: (which is a WHOLE other discussion...I think fan fiction is a great way to get kids working on plot...they can ignore characterization, because the characters are already established)

DonnaH: movies *eh*

DonnaH: but I like the fanfic.

DonnaH: it's a HUGE movement.

JenniferK2: So our kids could write the next chapter of Harry P

DonnaH: keeps me in reading material until the next book comes out.

DonnaH: yep.

DonnaH: or a behind the scenes.

JenniferK2: That's a good idea

DonnaH: like...oh I don't know...what happened when Snape went back to meet Voldemort the first time?

JenniferH4: they would enjoy that

DonnaH: but that can be used for ANY book.

JenniferK2: Yes, or what would have happened had Harry not caught the snipe

JenniferH4: right

DonnaH: it's also a good way to establish that they understand the book itself

DonAD: I like the fan fictions also but some of the parents are against so much of it. I have seen kids get hooked just by reading. And they also start writing after reading. Fosters great imagination

DonnaH: because you have to have a logical progression.

MichelleDT: We have a lot of parents here that are against it!

DonnaH: if you like Harry Potter, you might want to read stories by Iva Ibbotson.

DonAD: What book titles

DonnaH: (I believe it...glad I am where I am...I used it to teach)

JenniferK2: I just saw a book by that author but didn't get to look at it

DonnaH: Gosh...ummm...Which Witch, Platform 13, The Island of Aunts...

DonnaH: (tons more) but all are really good reads.

DonAD: Oh I read Platform 13 - good book

DonnaH: sort of in the feel of Sorcerer's stone...rather than the later ones...

DonnaH: definitely kept in the younger readers mind.

DonnaH: but very good reads.

DonAD: the age of the mind not the age of the reader

DonnaH: and I'll ask, because I haven't been able to yet...has anyone read Eoin Colter's newest book?

KristinDP: no

JudySi: no

JenniferH4: no

DonnaH: *sighs*

DonAD: not yet

DonnaH: (we know who he is, right?)

OfJennifeW: No waiting for it come with our fall book fair

MichelleDT: Not yet.

OfJennifeW: The supernaturalists?

DonnaH: I couldn't see paying \$17 for the hardcover.

JenniferK2: Yes.

OfJennifeW: That's why I love Book Fairs

DonAD: Fowle books great so I am sure I will like what ever he writes

DonnaH: even though I did with the eternity code

MichelleDT: I love the Artimes Fowle series. I am waiting for the next one!

DonnaH: his new book from what i understand isn't REALLY a fowl book.

OfJennifeW: It's not

DonnaH: (ah well, it's on my xmas list)

OfJennifeW: from what I understand

DonnaH: that's how I understood it too,

OfJennifeW: Try Eragon for fantasy fiction---the author was 16-17 when he wrote the book it's VERY GOOD--older readers or high level readers

DonnaH: So, does anyone else have ideas/questions they'd like to bring up?

DonnaH: Eragon?

DonnaH: (tell more)

OfJennifeW: It's about a teenager who finds a dragon egg and has to raise it and save from fighting countries and a bad guy

OfJennifeW: I think Chrisopher Paolini is the author--not sure about the last name

JenniferH4: sounds good, probably too high level for my fourth graders

MichelleDT: I can't wait to try the cemetery idea. I'm ready to go to a cemetery and take some digital pictures!

DonnaH: *chuckles*

OfJennifeW: probably so except for advanced readers but interesting for students to know author is so young

JenniferH4: I am excited about the spooky campfire story

OfJennifeW: I have an idea for how to make a campfire in your room with no fire

JenniferH4: yes Jen, and it might be a book I can read aloud

JenniferH4: great Jen

MichelleDT: I'll be in N.O. for a math conference in Nov. Maybe I can fit in a cemetery!

OfJennifeW: a guest storyteller would also be fun to have visit your room try asking your principal

DonAD: I am all ears Jenn W

JenniferH4: me too

DonnaH: you know too, Jen, a great way to keep order...hand around the flashlight.

DonnaH: the person with the flashlight is the person whose turn it is.

JenniferH4: yes, I like that

MichelleDT: I like that idea!

JudySi: good classroom management strategy

MichelleDT: Turn the lights off, close the blinds, set the mood! The kids would love it!

DonnaH: exactly.

DonnaH: (we did it in the summer, because of heat...but it works just as well for atmosphere:))

DonnaH: a nice rainy day wouldn't hurt either *grin*

JenniferH4: this would be good to do on Friday next week - Book Character day

MichelleDT: Yes!

DonnaH: or if your school does them...pajama day.

OfJennifeW: try s'mores to end up the story telling---marshmallow creme works instead of melting

DonnaH: (oh, like fluff?)

DonnaH: Any other questions? Ideas to share?

DonAD: I like the s'mores idea and book character day would be the perfect day to try this.

MichelleDT: A good book report idea is a pumpkin book report. The students decorate a pumpkin like the main character or a favorite character in the book.

JudySi: I like that idea Michelle

OfJennifeW: That is a really cool idea!!! I like that

JenniferH4: like that too. I wish I had these ideas sooner

MichelleDT: The students were really creative and loved sharing their pumpkin.

MichelleDT: If students don't have the money to buy a real pumpkin, you can give them a pumpkin picture to decorate.

MichelleDT: Would be great to tie into a field trip to a pumpkin patch.

DonnaH: I know one teacher in my daughter's school, who bought each child a pumpkin.

JenniferH4: yeah, that is probably what I would do. they could do the book that there character is from

JenniferK2: When I was student teaching we did this with 3rd graders. It was very interesting. They had a blast.

DonnaH: did all sorts of math activities with it...like estimation...

DonAD: Must pay more there for teachers

MichelleDT: You could ask for donations of pumpkins.

DonnaH: then would use the dried seeds as counters.

OfJennifeW: there are a lot of great ideas to go with that for math

DonnaH: (well, CT DOES pay more...but our COL is much higher too...)

DonnaH: but this teacher tended to go above and beyond.:

DonnaH: (just got a pictures of a carved out pumpkin with peter peter outside, and his wife inside looking out *laugh*

OfJennifeW: Thanks for all the great ideas

JudySi: bye

DonnaH: it IS time, isn't it *laugh*

KristinDP: It was great listening to everyone

DonnaH: Glad I could help!

MichelleDT: Thanks for the info. I'm getting tired myself! I can't wait to try the cemetery idea!

DonAD: I am ready to go try some of the great ideas in my classroom. Thanks .